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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 001178

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/I

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM KU

SUBJECT: CABINET RESIGNATION: NOT YET FINAL

REF: KUWAIT 1175

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and d

Cabinet Resignation Miscues

¶11. (U) Contrary to December 1 public announcements that Amir Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al Sabah had accepted the resignation of Kuwait's Cabinet (reftel), Parliamentary Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi clarified to the press on December 2 that such announcements were "misinterpreted" and that the Amir was only "inclined" to accept the resignation; the Amir has yet to officially release the existing ministers from their duties. The Speaker also confirmed widespread expectations that the Amir would likely reappoint PM Shaykh Nasser Muhamad Al Sabah. Al-Khorafi also announced the cancellation of the next parliamentary session on December 16. Political sources confirm that the December 1 announcement was a miscue, although Amiri acceptance of the cabinet's resignation is still viewed as a virtual certainty.

GOK Options

¶12. (C) Should the Amir accept the Cabinet's resignation -- a very likely scenario -- he will have a number of options:

-- The Amir has the constitutional authority to suspend parliament for a month; this right is extendable for up to another month. This option may be moot because Parliament cannot legally convene without the presence of at least one minister, though parliamentary legal experts are investigating this loophole.

-- The Amir is not constitutionally bound to a timetable to select a new cabinet. Pundits speculate that the cancellation of the December 16 parliamentary session is an indication that the PM will not likely appoint or reinstate ministers before the January 19-20 Arab Economic Summit.

Comment

¶13. (C) Kuwait's slow-rolling domestic political "crisis" is the number one topic of discussion among Kuwait's political elites, but is only slightly ahead of the intense interest Kuwaitis have displayed in the appointment of the new U.S. cabinet. A not inconsiderable number of Kuwaitis have expressed their combined frustration with weak leadership at the top, a non-performing cabinet and an irresponsible parliament; many would welcome a more muscular cabinet that could deal more effectively with the fractious parliament or, alternatively, an unconstitutional dissolution of parliament followed by purposeful action by the Amir and his advisors to steer Kuwait through the present financial crisis without the interference of obstreperous MPs.

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